

FEATURES

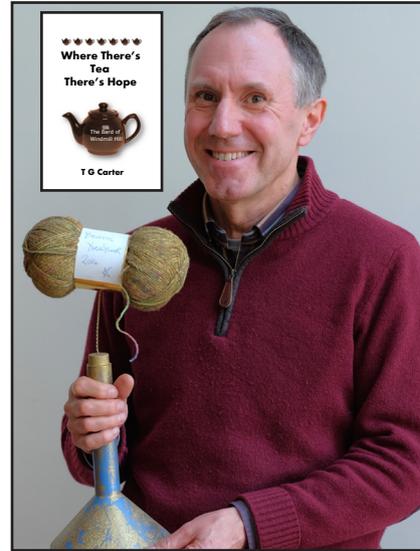
Meet the Bard of Windmill Hill, poet laureate of BS3

TREVOR Carter, originally from the north-east, has lived in Windmill Hill for more than 40 years. His title – the Bard of Windmill Hill – was self-selected. Or rather, someone suggested it to him and “it’s got a ring to it – it’s more memorable than my name” – so he took it on as his stage name – a public persona that he uses to comment on history and political events.

“People may assume my concerns are only local, but I have never written anything about Windmill Hill!” he told me (although he has taken part in the Art on the Hill art trail, and plays tennis regularly in Victoria park). Instead he writes about “the big picture stuff” and enjoys

Politics, comedy, and a love poem to an apple: Trevor Carter spreads his net wide, finds Beccy Golding

recording history in a concise form. Indeed, he has condensed weighty history books into just a few pages. “My interest is political history, with some social history. But philosophy, religion and psychology are all represented in my work,” he told me. He has written profiles of



Storyteller award: Trevor Carter spins a yarn

Where There's Tea, There's Hope

Some sayings are cathartic; they go straight to the heart. And when it's time to stop and think they nudge us all to start.

It's the verbal panacea, the all purpose antidote; it's echoed down the ages: 'Where there's tea, there's hope'.

Excerpt from the title poem of Trevor Carter's most recent book

politicians including Thatcher, Corbyn, Mandela and Obama.

Carter has a degree in history and politics and sees the role of historian and story-teller as part of the same thread. He is proud of two prizes he has been awarded – one was Student of the Year, in 1989, while studying for his degree at UWE, the other was Bristol Storyteller of the Year in 2014. This was for his performance of his story Meeting Mr Hog “a modern parable, with jokes, about a nocturnal visit and the repercussions of it.”

So while he sees himself as a story-teller, it's in the widest sense, with his work including book reviews, stories, articles, academic work, teaching, poetry and performance. “I see myself firstly as a writer. My performances are dramatisations of what I have written.”

Carter performs to all sorts of groups, from WIs, to rowdy pubs, to church services, and adapts his content accordingly. “My favourite love poem is one I wrote,” he said, “called Mother Nature. It's very raunchy. And can be read on a number of levels, like a lot of my work.”

Other poems are more comic. And probably his oldest poem is Ode To A Pink Lady, “a love poem to an apple.”

Trevor has a background in construction. “I like the satisfaction of precision, getting things to work.” His poetry reflects this, written to certain forms of rhythm and rhyme, like anapestic tetrameter, with two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed one, repeated four times in each line. This complex form

gives momentum and “is hard to do right. I am an admirer of Betjamen,” he told me, who had the philosophy of “don't let it out till you think it is as good as its going to get. I like to teach this in schools.”

Carter's work in schools includes writing and performance workshops. “It is lamentable that the English education system tends not to teach speaking.” His workshops address this. “I like working with children. They are honest audiences,” he said.

The Bard has four collections of poetry, all released by small independent Windmill Hill Publishing. His latest, Where There's Tea, There's Hope, came out in 2015, and is available at the Arnolfini bookshop or online.

Carter's current workload includes planning his festival circuit for next year (he has organised the word stage at Priddy folk festival for the last three years), and working on a new poetry collection for 2017.

In the future the bard would like to “do more collaborative things – I like working with musicians, magicians, circus and other entertainers – I like variety and I like the unexpected.”

Next on his agenda are the Lansdown Cabaret (“Bristol's longest running and best variety show”) in Clifton on Friday December 2, at which he is resident poet, and the bard's own Christmas Cabaret at Alma Tavern on Wednesday December 21, promising “preposterous poems, scintillating stories and irreverent songs.”

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